



# How Big A Problem in Vermont?

Vermont has been learning the hard way it is ill-prepared to deal with many of the complex and costly repercussions of toxic waste pollution — from a need for timely identification of suspected toxic waste sites, to a need for speedy emergency action when serious pollution is detected, to a need for effective clean-up and waste disposal.

A five-month investigation of public and private documents, and extensive interviews with scores of individuals associated with several serious toxic waste cases in Vermont, revealed the following:

□ Inadequate staffing and financing of a variety of state environmental and health agencies that are responsible for keeping Vermont's environment and workplaces safe from toxic waste contamination.

□ Poor to non-existent coordination and communication among some state and federal agencies responsible for hazardous material and toxic waste detection, prevention and cleanup.

□ Lack of responsiveness by some government agencies to complaints of suspected toxic waste contamination until situations have grown to crisis proportions.

□ Difficult health and job security choices for workers where hazardous materials are being handled.

□ Inadequate state and federal laws to handle toxic waste cases too small to qualify for federal cleanup funds but too costly for existing state cleanup programs to handle.

□ A lack of any emergency relocation

program in the state. As a result, families evacuated from their homes in Williamstown and Poultney have faced financial difficulties and found themselves having to seek assistance in ways they found humiliating.

The federal government has a program designed to deal with problems such as those created by past waste disposal practices. It is called the Superfund program and came into being with passage of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980. The law requires anyone who disposed of hazardous waste to notify the federal government, but the federal government has not enforced its notification requirement.

Nationally, 14,000 to 16,000 sites were

identified through this process, although a congressional official recently estimated there were as many as 75,000 toxic waste sites in the nation and the cost of cleaning up just the 4,170 worst ones could reach \$75.8 billion.

Vermont's list of potential hazardous waste sites was developed primarily from the EPA Superfund list. However, Vermont Agency of Environmental Conservation officials admit their list of 20 problem sites released last year is far from inclusive, partly because they relied on federal officials to give them information and partly because the agency does not have the funds to conduct its own study.

The list does not include some of the worst sites in Vermont, nor does it include some large generators of waste that do not

pose problems now, but may in the future.

For example, last year's worst sites — the Staco Inc. thermometer plant in Poultney and the Williamstown pollution problem — were not on the list. Several other sites that have been subject to state action in the past year included Mitoc Electronics, Ltd. in Williston, Catamount Dyers in Bennington, Gas Co. of Vermont in Barre, Safety Clean in Barre, the Vermont Morgan Convenience Store in Barre and the Young Landfill in Highgate. These were not on the agency's list either.

Richard Valentiniotti, director of the Environmental Agency's air and solid waste programs, says there are countless waste dumps and corporations generating hazardous wastes in Vermont that have not

(See page 8: How Big)

UNIFIRST, Williamstown  
Parker LF, Lyndon  
Ethan Allen (Colemans)  
Pine St Canal, Burlington  
Springfield LF, Springfield  
Mitoc Corp, Williston  
GAS CO, CVT, Barre  
Burgess Bros, Woodford  
Safety Clean, Barre  
Chaplain Cable, Colchester  
Georgia Pacific, Gilman  
Johnson Controls, Bennington  
Darling Hill, Lyndeville  
Tonsder, Bennington  
Vt ANG, Burlington  
Catamount Dyers, Bennington  
Agrico Farm Center, Bradford  
BFI - Buckingham  
Burlington Mon. LF, Burlington  
GE, Burlington  
Howe Richardson, Rutland  
IBM, Essex Jct  
Raffle LF, Colchester  
Union Carbide Bennington  
Union Carbide St Albans  
Vermont Log Bldg, Hartland

# How Big Is Vermont's Toxic Waste Problem?

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reported. It is possible that these sites could go undetected for years, he says.

As is the case nationally, there may also be small and large factories and landfills statewide that closed years ago, with no one left to tell what was dumped and where.

Thus, any synopsis of industries and landfills posing hazardous waste problems for Vermont is based on information from those companies reporting to the agency or that have come under investigation.

Taking that into consideration, this is a synopsis of those sites (exclusive of the Staco Inc. thermometer plant in Poultney which is dealt with in more detail elsewhere) which have been identified as potential or actual hazardous waste problems in Vermont:

**UNIFIRST CORP., WILLIAMSTOWN:** In 1980, chemically contaminated wastewater from Interstate Uniform Service, an industrial dry-cleaning plant later renamed the Unifirst Corp., leaked onto land near the town's elementary school, causing the eventual evacuation of two families living in nearby homes. Tests of the municipal water supply showed high levels of dangerous chemicals and it was determined that the water supply would have to be replaced.

Unifirst and others also had dumped hazardous wastes in the town's landfill over the years.

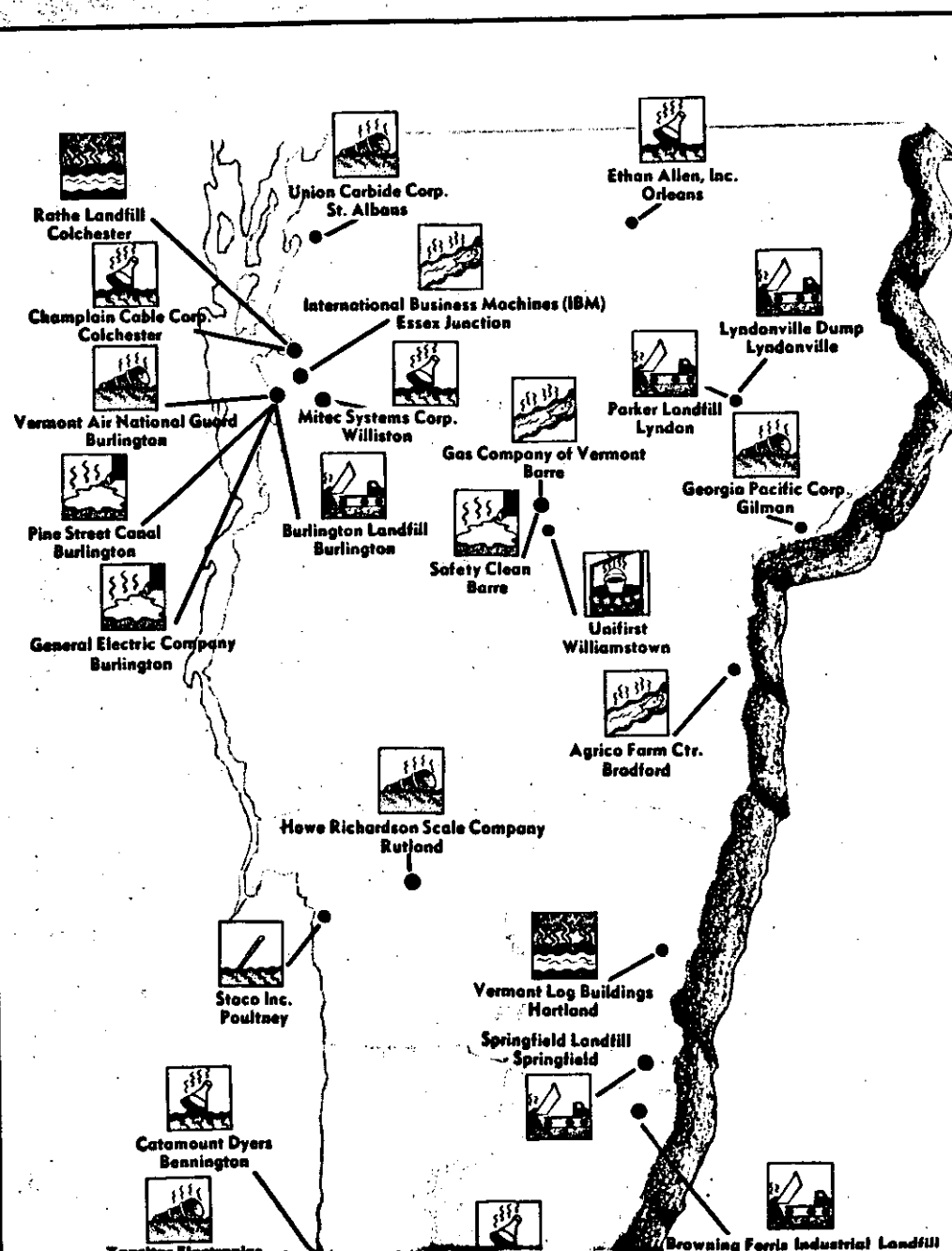
At a meeting called to discuss the water problem, resident Raymond Duff, a father of five, said he feared wells on his property were polluted. He had expressed his concern to state officials previously, but had been unsuccessful in getting anyone to test his well.

State tests showed the wells were contaminated with trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene, and 1,2 dichloroethane, all suspected carcinogens. The wells were immediately shut down.

Further investigation showed a brook near the elementary school, south next to the school and the air inside and outside the school contained fluctuating levels of pollutants. Unifirst, located in the middle of the contaminated area, was considered the source.

The pollution extended from the Unifirst plant to the town landfill and sites in Plainfield and Randolph where sludge from the plant had been dumped. Later tests showed that the Great Brook, which flows into the Winooski River and has a trout farm on its banks, contained 14 parts per billion tetrachloroethylene.

Unifirst has since closed its dry cleaning operation in Williamstown and there are several lawsuits pending. Dirt from a hillside behind the plant where chemical sludge had been buried was removed and shipped to Medford City, N.Y., a certified



ships its wastes, including junk batteries.

**LYNDONVILLE DUMP (DARLING HILL), LYNDONVILLE:** Contains metal hydroxide sludges, solvents, paint sludges, reactives, corrosives, ignitable wastes and spent cyanide solutions which it is feared are contaminating the town water supply.

**TANISITOR ELECTRONICS, BENNINGTON:** Solvents and acids (approximately 2,000 gallons) were dumped here. Excess leaded water, estimated at greater than 5 parts per million, was discharged into a ground area where from time to time soil was removed. Tantalum, moderately toxic by inhalation, and other chemicals toxic to the circulation system, were also dumped here. Enforcement action is planned by the Agency by September.

**VERMONT AIR NATIONAL GUARD, BURLINGTON:** Waste jet fuel was disposed of here over a long period of time and a fire training pit located here is being monitored for hazardous waste contamination of the environment. After a preliminary assessment by the agency, further action was recommended. Federal officials are currently monitoring and collecting samples here and making plans for remedial action through the U.S. Department of Defense.

**CATAMOUNT DYERS, BENNINGTON:** A bankrupt company, Catamount has been ordered to remove on-site wastes of numerous kinds used in the dyeing process. A notice of violation has been served, but legal action is in question because of the bankruptcy. Anne Whittely issued an order for the Environmental Agency to the trustee of the bankruptcy ordering removal of hazardous waste. In return, the company filed a notice of intent to abandon saying the plant has no worth. Drums have split open inside the building and pose a hazardous waste danger, according to the state. The state has opposed the company's intent to abandon.

The following are controlled sites which are being cleaned up or have been cleaned up, or sites which the state is monitoring:

**AGRICOR FARM CENTER, BRADFORD:** Approximately 100 lbs. of fertilizer with pesticide.

**BROWNING FERRIS INDUSTRIES' LANDFILL, ROCKINGHAM:** Contains oils, coolants, solvents, and plating waste sludge. Currently being monitored by the Environmental Agency's Solid Waste Management Program.

**BURLINGTON LANDFILL, BURLINGTON:** Contains mixed municipal refuse, solvents, plating waste sludge. The attorney general's office, following a recommendation by former Environmental Secretary Brendan Whittaker, filed litigation to close the dump which is now

#### Love Canal.

But the situation is far from resolved. Earlier this month, Gov. Madeleine M. Kunin asked the attorney general's office to renegotiate an agreement between the state and Unifirst signed by the previous administration in early January.

Kunin wants Unifirst to pay a settlement larger than the \$91,500 previously agreed to to ensure the construction or rehabilitation of the municipal water supply.

Attorney General Jeffrey Amestoy also was asked to negotiate an agreement under which groundwater contamination from the Unifirst site would be corrected, and contaminated soil from the Unifirst property and sludge from the Williamstown Wastewater Treatment Plant would be removed and properly disposed of.

Kunin has threatened to ask the EPA to bring suit against Unifirst if the state is unable to reach an agreement with the company.

**THE PARKER LANDFILL, LYNDON:** Water quality samples conducted as part of ongoing monitoring of Parker Landfill showed potential carcinogens and toxic chemical contamination of groundwater and surface water in the immediate vicinity of the landfill. Further tests showed trace amounts of chemicals commonly referred to as chlorinated hydrocarbons in nearby stream samplings and onto the land below.

Low levels of contaminants were found in three of 11 private wells tested Oct. 1, 1984.

Sheep which had been drinking from a stream which flowed through the landfill had to be slaughtered earlier this month because they contained high levels of trichloroethene.

Dr. Lloyd Thompson, owner of the sheep and the town health officer, became suspicious last year when his flock had a higher than average lambing loss; one lamb was born deformed and an otherwise healthy ram was found dead.

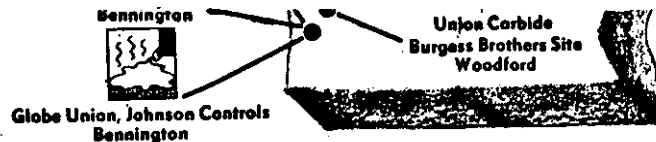
Volatile organic compounds were detected in water samples collected above and below the stream flowing through Thompson's property.

The Passumpsic River is threatened with contamination from trichloroethene and other dangerous chemicals which are seeping out of the landfill. Contamination of two private water supplies on route to the Passumpsic has already occurred.

An investigation of the extent of contamination is ongoing. Twenty-five sampling devices were installed in the brook which flows through the landfill to where it empties into the Passumpsic River. Samples of trichloroethene (TCE) in these samples ranged from below detection limits to 2,791 parts per billion.

The testing occurred after two residents became concerned about a pit of green liquid near which children had played. At a public meeting in September, State Air and Solid Waste Director Richard Valentini told residents the site probably posed no pollution problems, although tests conducted by the Environmental Agency taken the previous spring showed high levels of TCE and other contaminants.

**ORLEANS DIVISION OF ETHAN ALLEN INC., ORLEANS:** The Orleans Division of Ethan Allen Inc., a household



# Actual or Potential Hazardous Waste Sites

Map by Sam Trudel

furniture production company, reported that 9,000 cubic feet (550 gallons) per month of stains, lacquers, glues, solvents and other waste-finishing materials were disposed of on a four-acre area at the plant from 1953 to 1979.

After 1979, the company sent its wastes to the Barton sanitary landfill. Its first hazardous waste shipment to a certified disposal site did not occur until June, 1982.

Environmental Agency officials said the plant's owners have cooperated in evaluating and monitoring the on-site landfill to determine potential remedial actions.

The landfill is located in a marshy area about 800 feet from the Barton River and adjacent to the company softball field. It is not fenced off. Some crushed drums are visible. Surface water flows through the site into the wetland beyond.

The site is being carefully monitored for potential environmental and health hazards and remedial action will be taken if the agency determines that hazardous wastes from the landfill could migrate to the Barton River.

**PINE STREET CANAL, BURLINGTON:** On the EPA's Superfund list, this 40-acre site contains coal tar sludge and other problem wastes. It is being monitored by the Vermont Agency of Transportation which wants to build the I-89 southern connector over 11 acres of the landfill. An EPA grant of about \$750,000 was received for excavation of the Maltex Pond which is nearly pure coal tar, according to Anne Whitley, an attorney working with the Environmental Agency. The agency says it may cost as much as \$1 million to clean this site and it expects to seek reimbursement, at least in part, from Green Mountain Power Co., whose old coal gasification plant is considered responsible for much of the coal tar.

**SPRINGFIELD LANDFILL, SPRINGFIELD:** Chemicals dumped at the Springfield landfill are considered dangerous enough that the site was also listed on the federal Environmental Protection Agency's list of national hazardous waste sites.

No one knows if it and the Pine Street Canal site are the worst sites in the state because there has never been a statewide survey of hazardous waste sites. Without such a survey no one knows the extent of pollution of Vermont's land, water and air. This site contains oils, solvents, paint sludges, heat treating salts, plating and etching wastes, acids. No Superfund money has been released thus far. EPA says it will sue potentially responsible parties who dumped here for cleanup expenses.

**MITEC SYSTEMS CORP., WILLISTON:** The Vermont Attorney General's Office threatened to sue Mitec, a manufacturer of microwave components, for discharging hazardous wastes containing cyanide compounds and toxic cadmium, chromium, and nickel into a lagoon located on the property from 1979 to 1983.

The state is currently testing effluent from the lagoon to determine if it is carcinogenic. The attorney general has taken the electronics manufacturer to court to force cleanup of the lagoons and the suit is set for trial in April. But the company, after a slow start, has begun to cooperate in the clean-up, according to Wright.

**GAS CO. OF VERMONT, BARRE:** This problem company is being sued for storing 135,000 gallons of coal tar sludge for almost 30 years in two vats located near the Stevens branch of the Winooski River in Barre.

According to Wright, the state successfully negotiated the removal of the bulk of the coal tar. But the state wanted the company to build a trench to stop remaining hazardous wastes from leaching into the ground. When it refused, the state decided to build the trench itself and sue to retrieve its expenses.

After a slow start, the company agreed to work on a resolution with the Attorney General's Office and last week signed an agreement one day before the case was scheduled to be heard in court.

**BURGESS BROTHERS SITE, WOODFORD, NEAR BENNINGTON:** Union Carbide used the Burgess Brothers sandpit in

Woodford as a landfill during the 1970s. Now, effluent containing dangerous chemicals is feared by state officials to be contaminating the brook that runs through town and may be affecting water supplies.

Twenty-three million pounds of waste containing small amounts of toxic and in some cases potentially carcinogenic compounds was disposed here by Union Carbide from 1971-1978. The waste contains 605,000 pounds of heavy metals, including sodium and potassium hydroxides, 109,000 pounds of zinc, 63,000 pounds of organic solvents such as trichloroethene, tetrachloroethene and xylene, 42,000 pounds of manganese dioxide, 12,000 pounds of ammonia chloride, as well as mercury, zinc chloride, lead, nickel, nickel chloride and lubricating oils.

Moye said Union Carbide has hired a consultant and has made a proposal to clean up the landfill. The proposal is currently undergoing revision between company and state officials.

**SAFETY CLEAN, BARRE:** This company processes solvents and caustic materials generated by other Vermont companies and has lacked certain permits, particularly a permit to store hazardous waste until it can be treated. A notice of violation was filed with the Agency of Environmental Conservation and the state has sought legal action to force compliance.

**CHAMPLAIN CABLE CORP., COLCHESTER:** Stored chlorinated solvents, freon, and approximately 800 gallons of flammable solvents are being evaluated. A preliminary assessment has been conducted and further action is scheduled in the spring.

**GEORGIA PACIFIC CORP., GILMAN:** Approximately 3,300 gallons of solvents were dumped here. The site has not yet been evaluated for hazards, but it is scheduled for assessment prior to September.

**GLOBE UNION, JOHNSON CONTROLS, BENNINGTON:** This company is being evaluated for lead, oil and spill cleanup debris located on site. The company now

Waste Management Program for methane gas and other contaminant seepage. When new Environmental Secretary, Leonard Wilson came into office, Burlington Mayor Bernard Sanders asked that the dump be kept open for three to five years. Wilson agreed to the suggestion with the stipulation that there be greater control of the landfill. The City came to the Agency with a \$1.2 million proposal to cover the landfill with soil to stop infiltration into the Intervale, a section of Burlington.

The Agency said the landfill also needed an interceptor ditch built between the landfill and the Intervale and that the leached material would have to be disposed of at the city sewage treatment plant. A bond vote for the work was narrowly defeated by voters in March. There is no reference to the bond issue in the state's stipulation. It demands a schedule of closing the landfill and the building of an interceptor ditch by October, 1985, according to Valentini.

**GENERAL ELECTRIC CO., BURLINGTON:** Problem materials here are plating waste sludge and other hazardous wastes. GE has received a notice of violation from the Agency of Environmental Conservation for minor technical violations.

**HOWE RICHARDSON SCALE CO., RUTLAND:** Solvents and heavy metal sludges were dumped here for decades before the company was sold and closed about four years ago. Little is known about the status of these hazardous wastes.

**IBM, ESSEX JUNCTION:** Treats and/or stores about 4 million pounds of isopropylol, freon, diethylene, heavy metals and flourides, along with about 3,500 gallons of various solvents on site. There is a groundwater contamination problem here which the state has been monitoring for a number of years. Contaminated water is being withdrawn and treated.

**RATHE LANDFILL, COLCHESTER:** More than 7,000 gallons of chlorinated solvents, considered potential carcinogens, and heavy metals have been dumped here. This site will be assessed by the Hazardous Materials Management Program and is being monitored by the Solid Waste Management Program of the Agency.

**UNION CARBIDE CORP., BENNINGTON and ST. ALBANS:** Produces more than 500,000 kilograms of hazardous wastes, including plating waste sludge and lithium-containing bi-products. Union Carbide shipped 1,560 gallons of solvents, including trichloroethylene, lithium and lead batteries, lead-contaminated materials, oxidizers, corrosives, paint sludges, and sludges containing toxic organics and heavy metals in 1983. Previously, Union Carbide dumped some of its hazardous wastes at the Burgess Landfill.

**VERMONT LOG BUILDINGS, HARTLAND:** Five percent pentachlorophenol (considered a possible carcinogenic) and sawdust sludge is stored here. The Department of Agriculture is monitoring the site.

YMD